

News Release

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11-year-old school activist takes on recycling

RIVERSIDE, Calif. – James Gjurgevich, 11, has been recycling cans and bottles around the house since he was 7.

“That’s how he earns his allowance,” said Rachelle Gjurgevich, his mother.

Now, he is turning his sights to cleaning up the grounds and classrooms of his school, Castle View Elementary, 6201 Shaker Dr., by creating a school “green team.”

And it all started with homework.

He completed an essay assignment months ago about the litter problem on campus.

"He just expanded on that," Gretchen Fisher, his fifth-grade teacher, said. "I was surprised because he came up with a mission statement and in a few weeks he was discussing his plans with me and the principal. He and his Green Team organized everything themselves."

James and another classmate, Ellen Davis, started the team, which seeks to not only clean up the campus but to raise awareness throughout the school that recycling is always an option. A recycling bin for his classroom followed and announcements soon echoed over the school public address system to spread the word. The campaign is gathering speed. Principal Hayley Calhoun said that recycling will soon become standard operating procedure at the school.

"All of our class supported it, and we have raised over \$100 for recycling," James said. "The litter problem is getting better, but we're still working to bring everyone into this. We're looking for good role models."

That's when James found the Green Riverside portion of the Riverside Public Utilities Web site and e-mailed them for some help.

"I asked him what he was doing one night and he said 'I'm writing the city for help on recycling.' I went: 'Er, well, OK.' I encourage him, but I honestly thought the city would ignore an e-mail from an 11-year-old kid," said his mother. "As a member of the Parents/Teachers Organization I try to get people to do things all the time, and it's hard."

RPU officials have decided to help James set up his school program with advice and material. Riverside Mayor Ron Loveridge met with James, his parents and Castle View School officials Wednesday, and he promised more recycling bins from the public works department.

"We want to help recycling at all levels," said Ryan Bullard of RPU. "We'll be there for him if he wants our help."

James and his Green Team join a growing number of Riverside elementary and high school children who are committed to living green.

According to Jacquie Paul, communications specialist with the Riverside Unified School District, Emerson, Magnolia, Washington, Jefferson, Madison, Highland, Alcott and Monroe Elementary Schools, as well as Arlington High School and Sierra Middle School already have recycling programs in place or are working to create them.

Nevertheless, James' single-minded determination merits recognition.

"James didn't wait for someone to come along and solve the problem. He's doing it himself," Mayor Loveridge said. "It shows great initiative."

After cans and bottles, James is eyeing paper and voltage wasted at the school.

“I just wanted to influence people to go green,” James said. “But I would rather people recycle as part of their everyday life without thinking about it.”

Photo: James Gjurgevich, 11, confers with Riverside Mayor Ron Loveridge Wednesday about his recycling campaign. (Photo by Steve Jacobs)

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Established in 1895, Riverside Public Utilities is a consumer-owned water and electric utility governed by a board of nine community volunteers that provides high quality, reliable services to over 107,000 metered electric customers and 63,400 metered water customers throughout the City of Riverside. The Utility is committed to increased use of renewable energy resources and sustainable living practices that help reduce environmental impacts within the City of Riverside and the state of California.

www.RiversidePublicUtilities.com

www.GreenRiverside.com

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